

IMPERIAL STARFIRE



Original Game Designed by David M. Weber

Introduction To Imperial Starfire and Publishers Information

IMPERIAL STARFIRE allows players to build and expand their own imperiums and spheres of influence to dominate entire sectors of the galaxy. Players build their fleets and supporting infrastructure using the resources available from their home star systems and others of which they may gain control as they expand. Along the way, they will encounter non-player races and/or other player races with whom they will ally or fight.

The tactical *STARFIRE* scenarios which will appear in *THE STARS AT WAR* are rooted in the campaigns and battles of an “official” future history, which will continue to develop and expand as the game series is expanded. *IMPERIAL STARFIRE* is designed to allow two or more players to create their own history rather than following the events described in the “official” history.

Star systems and the characteristics of non-player races are generated randomly, using the rules and tables provided, as they are encountered. This creates an infinitely variable strategic game which allows each player to face the advantages and disadvantages, triumphs and tragedies, of a space faring race in its march to empire. The fact that the galaxy is generated as the game proceeds means that no player ever has the advantage of “pre-game intelligence,” and grappling with the unknown both adds to the challenge and increases the value of forethought and planning.

The game is designed for play with or without a game master. An open-ended campaign system is presented for use with a game master (called a “Space Master”, or “SM”, in the rules), but while an SM increases player uncertainty and enjoyment, the random generation rules also make the system suitable for play without an SM. In addition to the open-ended “New Empires” campaign, the rules also present the structure for two other campaigns: “The Barbarian Wars” and “The Mardukan Incident.” The same strategic rules are used in each, but the beginning parameters are quite different.

Because *IMPERIAL STARFIRE* uses the rules from tactical *STARFIRE* as the basis for combat (which, alas, given the nature of wargamers, is generally one of the more important aspects of a strategic campaign), players should be familiar with Rules 01.00-09.00 and the technical systems in Rules 26.00-27.00 before beginning any campaign.

Players should understand that the rates at which processes such as shipbuilding, research and development, emplacement of colonies, etc., may be accomplished under the strategic rules have been considerably compressed, allowing them to accomplish these processes in much less time than the constraints of “reality” would allow. This has been accepted to simplify and speed up game mechanics. The designers, recognizing this, have opted to satisfy

players who build their own campaigns at the expense of “realism.” The “historical scenarios,” on the other hand, are structured at a pace which reflects rather more realistic time requirements, which is one reason the fleets available to the historical empires do not mushroom enormously over the period of a given war.

NOTE TO PREVIOUS *STARFIRE* PLAYERS: The 3rd edition of *STARFIRE* is collectively known as *CLASSIC STARFIRE*. The rules are available through our website at <http://www.starfiredesign.com/starfire>. About 10 years ago the decision was made to move into digital distribution and only the newest versions of *STARFIRE* were made available. Technology is making it possible to publish materials for a lower cost, over more types of media, and available to the entire world... so we've decided to make all of *STARFIRE*'s versions available while we continue to publish new versions and new materials.

Publisher's Information

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Dealer inquiries are welcome. All dealer and ordering requests to the SDS should be through email at orders@starfiredesign.com. The SDS can also be reached by phone or postal mail at the address above, but all correspondence by snail mail requires a stamped self-addressed envelope.

The following correspondence can also be sent to orders@starfiredesign.com: requests for spare parts prices, orders for spare parts (if available), product updates, and the replacement of defective or missing parts.

Players should direct all comments, suggestions, submissions, and any expansion material for *STARFIRE* to the SDS by joining the Starfire Forum at <http://www.starfiredesign.com/forum>, or emailing cralis@starfiredesign.com or marvin@starfiredesign.com. All correspondence through postal mail must include a stamped self-addressed envelope if you wish to receive an answer or evaluation of your submission. Your return envelope *must* bear enough postage to cover the return of your questions (about four pages to one first class stamp). Foreign customers should enclose three International Reply Coupons, not foreign stamps or money. It is imperative that you place your name and address on *every* page of your correspondence. Please do not put questions and expansion material on the same sheet.

When sending questions, phrase each one so that it can be answered with a yes or no, a brief answer, or by circling one of several choices. Leave several blank lines after each question (not each group of questions). Please attempt to look up the answer yourself first. We will cheerfully answer questions about how the rules work, but cannot answer questions as to “WHY?” various things work the way that they do.

Design Credits

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Components

The original *IMPERIAL STARFIRE* was a box set with components. This digital version only includes the ISF rulebook. However, we have the following components available:

- Strategic Forms (available at <http://www.starfiredesign.com/starfire/downloads/>)
- 4-Part Map (available for order at <http://www.starfiredesign.com/starfire/order/>)
- Counters (also available for download)

The Interception Scale Map that was included with the original ISF is no longer available.

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11.00 Strategic Game Components

11.01 Scale

See 01.01

11.02 Star Systems (General Definition)

See 01.02

11.03 Warp Points (General Definition)

See 01.03

11.04 Game Maps

The *STARFIRE* game system uses four maps: the large system display map, the small system display map, the interception map, and the tactical map. (Please note that the tactical map included in the *STARFIRE* tactical rules is not the map used in *IMPERIAL STARFIRE*. The smaller map in the earlier product works fine for the scenarios in the tactical rules, but it will not work for later scenarios or for *IMPERIAL STARFIRE* campaign games.)

11.04.01 The System Display Maps. The large system display map (the two-part map) is used to set up entire star systems and, when necessary, conduct system play openly. The small system display map appears in the Forms Booklet in two places - as a separate map and as part of the System Data Form (which players should photocopy freely) and is used to plot hidden movement and to chart system data (populations, installations, etc.) known only to one player (and, of course, the Space Master).

Note that the large system display map is also the tactical map on which combat is gamed out. When the tactical scale is triggered, remove all units from the large strategic map, using a blank copy of the small system display map to note their locations for future reference, and set up the tactical situation.

The large numbers printed around the hex in the map's corner are referred to as the "scattergram". The scattergram is used when the optional simultaneous written movement rules are used, to indicate the initial facings of units in some "historical" scenarios, and to determine the facing of any unit making transit through an unmapped warp point.

11.04.01.1 The Tactical Map. The tactical and the large system display maps are the same physical map, but they are quite different in scale and purpose. Each hex of the system display map represents an area 12 light-minutes across; each

hex of the tactical map represents an area 30 light-seconds across. The system display map is used for system scale movement; the tactical map is used for tactical-scale movement (combat).

The tactical map as a whole represents a single interception hex (see 11.04.02). When units moving at the interception level drop to the tactical, they are set up along the edge of the system display map (now the tactical map) corresponding to the direction from which those units entered the interception hex which the tactical map now represents. The leading unit(s) of each player's formation are placed in the center of the appropriate hex side, and any additional units are placed in any desired and appropriate formation behind those leading unit(s).

11.04.02 The Interception-Scale Map represents a single system-scale hex from the large system display map and has two uses: to display individual system hexes on the interception scale and for interception-scale play. The large numbers from "1" to "6" printed opposite the faces of the interception-scale map's hexagonal sides are keyed to the system display map's scattergram and are used to orient the interception-scale map to the system display map.

The hex over-printed on the map represents a system hex. Since each system hex is 12 light minutes (or 24 interception hexes) across, the area inside the large central hex of the interception-scale map is used for detailed display of any system hex on a .5-light-minute scale. The over-printed system-scale hex also serves as a guide in shifting moving units from the system to the interception scale. When players move from the system to the interception scale, they should position their units in the center hex of the side of the center system-scale hex which corresponds to the direction from which they entered the system hex the interception map represents.

11.04.03 Players should place the large system display map and the interception-scale map on their gaming table and refer to rule 01.01 of Tactical Starfire to be certain that they understand how the game scales and maps interface with one another before proceeding further with the rules.

11.05 Imperial Record Forms

IMPERIAL STARFIRE uses several record forms which are not used in the tactical game. These are: The System Data Form, the Fleet Roster, the Fleet Order Form, the Imperial Treasury Record, the Master Movement/Arrival Chart, the Miscellaneous Orders Record, and the Imperial Map. Sample forms are provided for some (but not all) of these, and players should photocopy several copies of each before beginning any campaign game. The following section gives a brief definition

of each form; their detailed use is covered under the appropriate rules sections.

11.05.01 The System Data Form is printed on the front and back of the small system-scale map. The boxes on the map are used to record data on any surveyed star system, including primary type; warp point locations, types, and destinations; and the distances between warp points. The locations of installations, the populations (if any) and value of planets, political relations between the player empire and any inhabited planet(s), etc., are noted in the appropriate boxes on the back of the map. In effect, this annotated map is a one-page entry in your Galactography Data File. (Which is one reason players should make photocopies of it!)

11.05.02 The Fleet Roster is used to record the numbers and types of all warships and Imperial Freighters assigned to the fleets, task forces, etc., of an empire. A starship not assigned to a specific force listed on the empire's Fleet Roster does not exist for the turn it is omitted. It cannot move, detect or report hostile spacecraft, or be used in combat, but neither may it be attacked. If, however, a starship not assigned to a specific force on the Fleet Roster is in a star system which a hostile force passes through in the course of a strategic turn or in which a hostile force destroys or drives out all other friendly starships, that unlisted starship is considered destroyed. Because fleets may vary so in size, players should use a separate sheet of blank paper to record each fleet, task force, etc.

11.05.03 The Fleet Order Form details the movement and mission of each formation belonging to an empire. A formation not listed on the Fleet Order Form in a given turn cannot move on any level unless it or other friendly units in the same star system are attacked. If an attack occurs, the formation begins movement at Stand-By Readiness (see 06.00) from its last properly noted position and will only defend itself and/or friendly units in the same star system until new orders are received from the nearest Imperial Command Center. Immobile units (such as warp point defense fortresses) must be listed on the Fleet Order Form only if they are to be held at a level of readiness above Stand-By.

11.05.03.1 Under the provisions of 07.02.02, a graded admiral may change or countermand fleet orders written to cover his own command or units in any system through which he passes, but this does not apply to units not listed on the Fleet Order Form. If actual combat occurs in the system containing the units, he may assume command of their defensive reaction, but he may not give them any orders which would take them out of the system of combat.

11.05.04 The Treasury Record Form is used to record all economic transactions and the current balance in the imperial treasury. Any income not recorded on the Treasury Record in the turn it is accrued is permanently lost. Any

economic resources dispatched via the imperial freight network or Imperial Freighter must also be recorded. (This can be recorded on a blank sheet of paper.)

11.05.05 The Master Movement/Arrival Form is an optional but strongly recommended record. The exact strategic turn and time any unit of any empire moving on the strategic level will enter any star system should be recorded in chronological order on a single form listing all moving units of that empire. In this way, the players can be certain nothing "falls through the cracks." In Space-Mastered games, the SM should keep a single master record combining those of all players.

11.05.06 The Miscellaneous Order Form. Players will often need to send out orders which do not fit neatly on the Fleet Orders forms (such as fleet combat instructions to cover special contingencies, planetary combat orders, instructions to local governors, etc.) No single "form" could cover such a wide variety of possible needs, so the "Miscellaneous Orders Form" may be any handy sheet of paper. Note, however, that the exact place and time an order is written and when it will reach its intended recipient must be recorded for each order transmitted.

11.05.07 The Imperial Map. Each player is responsible for making and maintaining an updated map of his empire's star systems. A format for this is suggested (see 25.00), but players should feel free to use their own notations if they feel more comfortable with them and if the format used is clear and unambiguous. The Space Master will usually maintain a master map containing all known systems, but each player's map should list only those star systems he has himself surveyed or on which he has obtained data via spies, capture, or from an ally.

11.05.08 The Master Systems List. The players (or the SM, if there is one) must prepare and maintain a complete master system list (see 11.09). This is simply a list of identification numbers which will be assigned to each star system as that system is discovered by one of the players. In Space-Mastered games, the SM may choose to generate all of the systems ahead of time (if he's a masochist), but generally these will be completely unknown even to him until they are explored. An SM may, on the other hand, choose to pre-generate a limited number of systems containing exceptionally high-tech non-player races or other surprises for the players. In such a case, he must assign a system number at the time he generates each such system. If there is no SM, the players are responsible for maintaining the master system list.

11.06 Strategic Level Terminology

Certain specialized terms are used in the strategic game. Short definitions of the more important terms, along with the commonly used abbreviations for them, are given below.

Economic Level: The economic level of a planet, star system, or Imperium is determined by and equal to its tech level. In essence, the economic level reflects the revenues which can be generated by a given level of technology, regardless of the military systems of that tech level which have or have not been developed.

Economic Value Multiplier: A quantification, based on economic level, of technology and population as wealth generating factors. Abbreviated EVM.

Empire: Any multi-planet and/or star system political unit. Often called “Imperium” when speaking in general terms and an “empire” when referring to player-controlled empires.

Gross Planetary Value: The value of a planet, in megacredits, to the controlling player or NPR. Gross Planetary value is determined by multiplying REI (see below) by EVM and is abbreviated GPV.

Habitability Differential: The absolute difference between the Habitability Indexes of two worlds (see below). Abbreviated HD.

Habitability Index: All habitable planets fall into a range of categories quantified from 1 to 10. The value rolled on 1D10 for any habitable planet to define its habitability in terms of all other habitable planets is called its Habitability Index. Abbreviated HI.

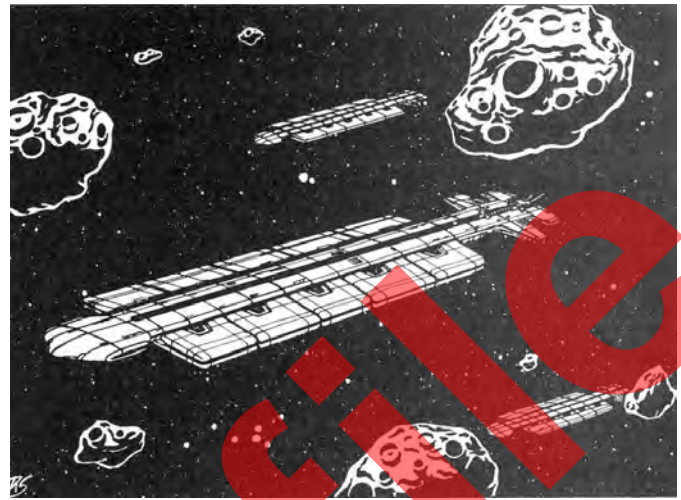
Imperial Capital: The planet from which an Imperium is governed.

Imperial Command Center: Imperial Command Centers (abbreviated ICC) are communication and decision-making nodes within an Imperium. They may be thought of as sector capitals, as they contain both civilian and military command facilities.

Imperial Communication Network: The Imperial Communication Network (abbreviated ICN) is the chain of communications between star systems. At HT4, the ICN can become quite flexible and responsive as deep space communication buoys become available; prior to that, communications will tend to be slow and cumbersome.

Imperial Freighter: These are freighters owned by an Imperium’s government. They must be individually built, are treated exactly as military starships for movement purposes, and require maintenance payments.

Imperial Freight Network: Abbreviated IFN, the Imperial Freight Network represents an Imperium’s privately-owned (or, at least, consumer-oriented) freighters. It extends only to star systems which contain at least one spaceport or at least one space station with cargo handling systems. The IFN is not as closely controlled by or responsive to the imperial government as Imperial Freighters, but the Imperium is not required to build



individual ships for the IFN or pay maintenance for its units. It is a subsumed portion of the game.

Maintenance: This is a monthly fee paid for Imperial Freighters, military units, and some infrastructure components of an Imperium. It represents spare parts, repairs, routine servicing, crew wages, etc.

Non-Player Race: Any civilization-building sentient race other than that of one of the players. Non-player race is abbreviated NPR. NPRs may be player-controlled (depending upon the military/political relationships a player race can establish with them) or controlled by the SM. In games without Space Masters, “independent” NPRs are generally controlled by an “uninvolved player” (see below).

Player Race: The race native to a player’s home world. Also called an “Imperial Race” to differentiate it from non-player races (see above) incorporated into an empire’s political structure as subjects or allies.

Resource Exploitation Index: A numerical value which quantifies the degree to and efficiency with which the inhabitants of a world exploit its resources. Abbreviated REI.

Space Master: The game’s referee, organizer, chief clerk, and general all-round Master of the Universe. Abbreviated SM. (Warning to all players: Do not irritate the SM, or he will feed you to the BEMs.)

Spaceport: Properly speaking, spaceports are ground-based facilities for handling starships and/or their cargo. The term is also used in a more general fashion in the economic rules, where it is understood to include space stations with cargo-handling systems that perform the same functions.

Uninvolved Player: This term is used often in rules governing NPR actions and should be clearly understood. An uninvolved player is one who has no contact with the NPR and (if possible) none with the player race in an NPR-player race situation, as well. If all players are in contact with the player race, then the player whose empire has the least favorable relationship (short of war)

with the player race should be selected as the uninvolved player. If more than one player has an equally nasty relationship with the player race, then a random die roll should be used to decide which of a player's enemies will be considered "uninvolved."

11.07 The Imperial Economic System (General)

All economic transactions are made on a monthly basis (or once per strategic turn). Each empire uses "megacredits" (units of one million credits, abbreviated "MC") as the standard economic unit. All wealth and non-monetary resources in the game are simplified into megacredits.

Megacredits are obtained from the economies of the star systems an Imperium controls politically (see 17.00). The value of a planet to an Imperium is determined by using the tables provided (see 15.03.06), and is based on the exploitation of the planet's resources and the production capability of the planetary population. If a planet has a spaceport (see 27.02.11) or a space station with cargo handling systems (see 27.03.03 & 27.07.04), resources generated on that planet may be used on any other planet with a spaceport or by any space station in the same system, and the MC balance for all such worlds in the star system is recorded as a single whole. The resources of any planet without a spaceport must be recorded separately and can only be used elsewhere if physically picked up by cargo shuttles.

Any resources generated by any planet may be shipped to other planets or other systems if a player desires (see 15.04). This may be done via the Imperial Freight Network if the planet in question has a spaceport, or via Imperial Freighters which physically collect the resources from the planet(s) of origin.

Resources (megacredits) may be used for economic investment, infrastructure expenditures (R&D, command and control structures, etc.), or pure military items (weapons, PCF, warships, bases, etc.).

11.08 The Imperial Political System (General)

All political interaction other than First Contact (see 17.01) with other races, including activated NPRs, allied/conquered populations, and other player empires, takes place during the political phase of the strategic turn. The nine possible political states which may exist between player empires or between player races and NPRs are:

- War;
- Non-Intercourse;
- Non-Aggression;
- Conquered;
- Trade Intercourse;
- Military Alliance;
- Trade & Military Alliance;

- Partnership;
- Amalgamated.

The exact meaning and consequences of each of these states is defined under the political interaction rules (see 17.02).

11.08.01 When any NPR is discovered, its initial political relationship with the discovering empire must be determined. If the initial relationship does not cede control of the NPR to the discovering empire, the NPR will be run by the SM (if there is one) or an uninvolved player, using the NPR economic and military guidelines (see 16.00).

11.08.02 Political relationships are determined by negotiation and/or military action. Conquered races are controlled by empires by placing planetary control forces (PCF), or military forces, on the conquered planets, which may or may not rebel against the controlling empire (see 17.03.02). Certain other relationships give a player empire partial or full control of an NPR (see 17.02).

11.08.03 Player empires which come into contact with one another may make treaty agreements during the political phase. Player races may also attempt to change their political relationships with NPRs, but no more than one attempt per NPR may be made per month. Each conquered population must be checked for rebellion once per month.

11.09 The Master Systems List and Initial System Mapping (General)

In games with a Space Master, only the SM has access to the Master Systems List (11.05.08), which is simply a list of potential system numbers. In games without a Space Master, all players have access to the Master Systems List. In a New Empires campaign, the game will usually begin with a pre-agreed total possible number of systems, the ID numbers of all of which should be recorded in numerical order on the Master Systems List before play starts. In Barbarian Wars or Mardukan Incident campaigns, some system numbers will already be blocked as belonging to an established Imperium, though only the SM will know ahead of time which numbers have, in fact, been assigned to the established Imperium.

11.09.01 As the survey ships of a player transit any unexplored warp point, the surveying player rolls an appropriate number of 10-sided dice (see 13.01) to determine the system number of the system to which it connects. The SM (or the player, if there is no SM), then consults the Master Systems List and circles the appropriate system number on that list. If the system number is already circled, this indicates that someone else has already surveyed it, in which case the surveying player's entry warp point will automatically be a "closed" warp point (see 01.03 and 13.06.02), but the Space Master (if there is one) should never inform the surveying player that the system has already been surveyed or by whom.

11.09.02 In addition to the Master Systems List, the SM (or the players, if there is no SM) must maintain a master map on which the warp connections between all explored star systems are recorded. Each player is also responsible for maintaining his own imperial map, which records the warp connections between all the star systems he has actually surveyed. It is possible for astrogation information to be captured or supplied by an allied player or NPR, and information obtained in these fashions should be added to the player's imperial map as well. From time to time, the SM may want to call in the players' imperial maps and check them against his master map as a safeguard against error creeping into the system. In any case of conflict between a player's imperial map and the master map, the master map takes precedence.

11.09.03 Once a new system is entered by an empire and the SM (or the players, if there is no SM) have determined whether or not the system has already been surveyed, the newly discovering player must conduct his own survey using the rules given under 19.00. If the system has already been surveyed, the SM (or the player who first discovered it, if there is no SM) already knows what the system looks like and provides the newly discovering player with survey information as he accrues it. If the system has not already been surveyed, the survey information is not even generated until the newly discovering player's exploration ships carry out their survey.

(Note to the SM: It is always advisable to keep players as much in the dark as possible. For this reason, all survey should be conducted as if the system were being generated for the

first time, making dice rolls wherever appropriate, whether or not the system has actually been previously surveyed.)

11.09.04 As survey information is accrued, the surveying player records it on a fresh system data form (see 11.05.01). The system data form is then used as a permanent record of data for system-level movement (should it be required) in the system, as well as to track economic, industrial, tech level, etc., information and to calculate transit times for strategic starship movement and message transmission across the system.

(Note to the SM: It is usually a good idea to have the surveying player make 2 copies of his system data form as he goes along. This provides both of you with an identical starting point for future reference and lets you check his data against that of the original surveyor if someone else has already explored the system. It also takes some of the record-keeping burden off of you--and goodness knows you have enough to do already!)

11.10 Victory

The rules for each *STARFIRE* campaign define its victory conditions. Players should, of course, feel free to establish their own victory conditions, so long as all players know what they are before play begins. In general, the New Empires Campaign victory conditions provide a good model: the player with the greatest wealth at the end of the game, wins. "Wealth" in this case is determined by totaling the Gross Planetary Values (GPV) of all controlled planets, plus the value in megacredits of all trade allies and existing spacecraft and ground bases.

